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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

HOME ECONOMICS MONOGRAPH

A supplementary educational monograph entitled *Home Economics in American Schools* is now available. This monograph is the result of a series of investigations carried on by members of the Home Economics Department of the School of Education and other teacher-training institutions. The investigations include a quantitative study of existing courses of study in elementary and secondary schools, a minute analysis of the textbooks in current use, and a thorough study of the aims and objectives of home economics instruction as described in recent literature.

The most striking facts revealed by the investigations are summarized by the writers in the following terms: (1) there is little evidence of a continuous sequentially arranged curriculum in the public schools; (2) teaching emphasis is placed on information and technique rather than on powers of thinking and good judgment; (3) vague statements of aims and outcomes are prevalent which show the work to be controlled primarily by an interest in subject-matter; (4) there are few tests and scales with which to measure achievement or progress; (5) there is no definite program of curriculum making.

After discussing the present status of home economics instruction the writers outline clearly and definitely the lines along which reorganization should take place. The most important outcomes of home economics instruction are discussed, and tests are designed for use in measuring the information, judgment, and skill which the pupils acquire. Special attention is given to the problem of curriculum making.

The monograph is the most comprehensive summary available of the status of home economics instruction in American schools. It will unquestionably stimulate careful thinking on the part of home economics teachers and supervisors concerning their problems. The constructive suggestions which are offered should lead to radical changes in current practices. The tests which have been prepared should lead to detailed analyses of the accomplishments of children.

INDIVIDUAL LABORATORY WORK VERSUS LECTURE DEMONSTRATION

Harry A. Cunningham, A.M., University of Chicago, 1920, recently carried on an experimental investigation to determine whether individual laboratory work or lecture demonstration secured the better results. Thirteen different class experiments were given to each of two classes which had been grouped according to results secured through the use of the Chicago Group Intelligence Test. The experiments were given to one section as lecture demonstrations and to the other as individual laboratory work.

The results which were secured by Mr. Cunningham are in harmony with those secured in other recent experiments along similar lines. They show clearly that time can frequently be saved by the lecture-demonstration method. This is especially true when the method of work is very complicated and the experiences new to the child. There are two conditions, however, under which individual laboratory work secures as good or better results than the lecture-demonstration method.

In the first place, experiments which must be started before the regular laboratory period or which must continue after the close of the hour give practically the same results by both methods. In an experiment of some length, such as one on osmosis, the value of the results is increased if pupils are active agents in the setting up of experiments. As the difficulty of the experiment increases, less and less valuable results are secured through individual work, owing to the discouragement and distractions which the pupils encounter.

In the second place, experiments which involve familiar apparatus and methods of procedure secure as good or superior results by the individual laboratory work as by the lecture-demonstration method. The explanation given is that the student's mind is sufficiently free in such cases from the details of the procedure to enable him to consider the results and their explanations more carefully as he proceeds with the steps of the experiment.